

Lucio & Morath Recognize SBCISD Teacher

Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville), and Commissioner of Education Mike Morath were at Dr. Cash Elementary School in San Benito to recognize the outstanding achievements of 4th Grade Writing Teacher Ms. Krystal Contreras, recipient of the Milken Educator Award.

A \$25K surprise: San Benito elementary teacher receives education award*

SAN BENITO — It was time to share the secret — one that was a surprise of a lifetime.

Students and faculty packed in the cafeteria at the Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School to celebrate what they thought was going to be an assembly.

As the children took their seat on the floor, dignitaries including state Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. and Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath sat in chairs.

San Benito CISD was about to witness an event that's described as the "Oscars of teaching."

And one teacher in that room was going to be announced as the recipient of the \$25,000 Milken Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation headquartered in Santa Monica, California.

Upon hearing her name called, Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School fourth-grade writing teacher Krystal Contreras, 37, put the palms of her hands together and placed them in front of her dropped jaw.

She was clearly in shock.

After coming to terms with what just happened, Contreras walked to the front of the room and was congratulated for her achievements.

"I still think this is all a dream," Contreras said after the ceremony. "There are so many teachers who deserve this. I can't believe this is happening to me of all people."

Contreras is one of 33 educators who will receive the award for the 2018-19 school year.

She's the only recipient from Texas this year and the first recipient from San Benito CISD in the history of the award.

Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary School Principal Dilia Cornett said Contreras is one of her teachers who has developed a collaborative and team mentality in her campus.

“Krystal gives so much of herself to her children, and her classroom is very-well organized, but not only that,” Cornett said. “Beyond that, another thing that Krystal brings to our campus is that she shares all of these great ideas not only with her team, but with other teachers within our campus.”

The Milken Educator Award is alternately given each year between elementary and secondary educators.

Unlike most awards, educators cannot apply for this recognition and don’t even know they’re under consideration.

That’s why it is such a surprise to those who received the award.

Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. The most exceptional candidates are recommended for the award with final approval by the Milken Family Foundation.

According to the Milken Family Foundation, there was a five percent increase in the Dr. C.M. Cash Elementary fourth-graders who passed end-of-year writing assessments, from 82 percent to 87 percent.

Both years, the percentage was the highest in the district and the foundation believes Contreras played a key role with her writing boot camps and innovative, engaging lessons.

“I’m very excited that one of our teachers was recognized today for her outstanding efforts, but we also recognize that excellence does not happen with isolation,” said Superintendent Dr. Nate Carman. “Dr. Cash Elementary exemplifies the gold standard of public education that San Benito CISD is striving for so the entire district expresses gratitude for this award and we’re very proud of Mrs. Contreras.”

WHAT IS THE MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD?

The award provides recognition and unrestricted financial awards of \$25,000 to exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists who are furthering excellence in United States schools.

In addition to participation in the Milken Educator Network, 2018-2019 recipients will attend a Milken Educator Forum in New Orleans.

* Hernandez, Alana. "A \$25K surprise: San Benito elementary teacher receives education award." *The Monitor*, 16 February 2019, <https://www.themonitor.com/2019/02/16/25k-surprise-san-benito-elementary-teacher-receives-education-award/>